



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 706

February Session, 2014

Substitute House Bill No. 5564

House of Representatives, April 29, 2014

The Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding reported through REP. WIDLITZ of the 98th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL SAFETY.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) (a) For the fiscal year ending June
2 30, 2015, the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection
3 shall establish a safe travel to school grant program to provide grants
4 to towns for expenses incurred as part of improving student safety
5 along routes of travel to schools and in the immediate areas around
6 schools during the hours before and after regular school hours.

7 (b) On or before July 15, 2014, a town may submit an application, at
8 such time and in such manner as the department prescribes, to the
9 department for a grant pursuant to this section. Each application shall
10 include a plan for the improvement of student safety along routes of
11 travel to school and in the immediate areas around schools during the
12 hours before and after regular school hours. Such plan shall (1) be
13 developed by the town in consultation with the local law enforcement
14 agency and local or regional board of education for such town, (2)

15 include the travel routes to schools and areas around such schools that
16 will be covered by such plan, (3) establish the hours before and after
17 school during which supervision may be provided along such travel
18 routes and areas around such schools, and (4) require that any person
19 assisting in the implementation of such plan submit to state and
20 national criminal history records checks prior to implementation of
21 such plan.

22 (c) Not later than August 1, 2014, the department shall select up to
23 ten towns to receive grants under this section and shall give priority to
24 towns in which priority school districts are located or towns in which a
25 priority school is located.

26 Sec. 2. (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Emergency Services
27 and Public Protection shall study the feasibility of establishing a
28 student safety hotline. Such study shall include, but not be limited to,
29 an analysis of (1) the feasibility of establishing a student safety hotline
30 that receives anonymous phone calls and text messages relating school
31 safety concerns of students in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive,
32 and provides assistance to and referrals for such students, (2) the
33 relevant referral areas and appropriate entities and agencies to receive
34 such referrals, (3) training for operators of such student safety hotline,
35 (4) existing student safety hotlines in other states, (5) legal issues that
36 might be associated with the administration of such student safety
37 hotline, and (6) any other relevant topics or issues associated with such
38 student safety hotline. Not later than January 1, 2015, the department
39 shall submit such study to the joint standing committee of the General
40 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in
41 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

42 Sec. 3. Subsection (c) of section 10-222d of the general statutes is
43 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*
44 *passage*):

45 (c) Not later than [January 1, 2012] July 1, 2014, each local and
46 regional board of education shall [approve] submit the safe school
47 climate plan developed pursuant to this section [and submit such plan]

48 to the Department of Education for approval in accordance with
49 section 4 of this act. Not later than thirty calendar days after approval
50 of [such] the safe school climate plan by the [local or regional board of
51 education] department, the board shall make such plan available on
52 the board's and each individual school in the school district's Internet
53 web site and ensure that such plan is included in the school district's
54 publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for
55 schools and in all student handbooks.

56 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of
57 Education shall receive and review each safe school climate plan
58 submitted pursuant to subsection (c) of section 10-222d of the general
59 statutes, as amended by this act. The department may approve or
60 reject a safe school climate plan if such plan does not adequately
61 ensure a safe school climate at the schools under the jurisdiction of the
62 board of education submitting such plan. If the department rejects a
63 safe school climate plan submitted by a local or regional board of
64 education, such board of education shall redevelop and resubmit the
65 safe school climate plan to the department for approval not later than
66 thirty calendar days after such rejection. If the department rejects such
67 resubmitted plan, such board of education shall adopt the model safe
68 school climate plan, developed by the department pursuant to
69 subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of section 10-222h of the general
70 statutes, as amended by this act.

71 (b) The Department of Education shall make available on the
72 department's Internet web site (1) each safe school climate plan that
73 has been approved by the department, (2) a list of the school districts
74 that have an approved safe school climate plan, and (3) a list of the
75 school districts whose safe school climate plan has been rejected and is
76 in the process of resubmitting its safe school climate plan for approval
77 by the department.

78 Sec. 5. Section 10-222h of the 2014 supplement to the general statutes
79 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
80 *from passage*):

81 (a) The Department of Education shall, within available
82 appropriations, (1) document school districts' articulated needs for
83 technical assistance and training related to safe learning and bullying,
84 (2) collect information on the prevention and intervention strategies
85 used by schools to reduce the incidence of bullying, improve school
86 climate and improve reporting outcomes, (3) develop or recommend a
87 model safe school climate plan for grades kindergarten to twelve,
88 inclusive, and (4) in collaboration with the Connecticut Association of
89 Schools, disseminate to all public schools grade-level appropriate
90 school climate assessment instruments approved by the department,
91 including uniform surveys that collect information about students'
92 perspectives and opinions about the school climate at the school and
93 allow students to complete and submit such surveys anonymously, to
94 be used by local and regional boards of education for the purposes of
95 collecting information described in subdivision (2) of this subsection so
96 that the department can monitor bullying prevention efforts over time
97 and compare each district's progress to state trends.

98 (b) On or before February 1, 2014, and annually thereafter, the
99 department shall, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a,
100 submit a report on the status of its efforts pursuant to this section
101 including, but not limited to, the number of verified acts of bullying in
102 the state, an analysis of the responsive action taken by school districts,
103 an analysis of student perspectives and opinions about school climate
104 at schools and any recommendations it may have regarding additional
105 activities or funding to prevent bullying in schools and improve school
106 climate to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly
107 having cognizance of matters relating to education and children and to
108 the speaker of the House of Representatives, the president pro tempore
109 of the Senate and the majority and minority leaders of the House of
110 Representatives and the Senate.

111 (c) The department may accept private donations for the purposes
112 of this section.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------|
| Section 1 | <i>from passage</i> | New section |
| Sec. 2 | <i>from passage</i> | New section |
| Sec. 3 | <i>from passage</i> | 10-222d(c) |
| Sec. 4 | <i>from passage</i> | New section |
| Sec. 5 | <i>from passage</i> | 10-222h |

FIN *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

| Agency Affected | Fund-Effect | FY 15 \$ | FY 16 \$ |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection | GF - Cost | up to 4 million | none |

Municipal Impact:

| Municipalities | Effect | FY 15 \$ | FY 16 \$ |
|---|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Various Local and Regional School Districts | Revenue Gain | up to 4 million | none |

Explanation

Section 1 of the bill creates a safe-travel-to-school grant program to provide grants to towns to improve student safety along routes to school. The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) will administer the program, awarding up to 10 grants to towns by August 1, 2014. The average cost of a grant is anticipated to be approximately \$400,000 (based on national data of similar programs, including those operated by the Federal Department of Transportation). The total state cost to award up to 10 grants is anticipated to be approximately \$4 million in FY 15, and a corresponding revenue increase would result in the ten municipalities that receive a grant.

Section 2 requires DESPP to study the feasibility of establishing a student safety hotline, which is not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact as they have qualified staff available to conduct the study.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 make procedural and clarifying changes to the safe school climate plan submission, and are not anticipated to result

in a fiscal impact.

The Out Years

There is no fiscal impact in the out years.

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 5564*****AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL SAFETY.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill:

1. creates a new safe-travel-to-school grant program to improve student safety along routes to school,
2. requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to approve or reject school district safe school climate plans,
3. adds specific requirements to safe school climate surveys, and
4. requires a feasibility study for a student safety hotline.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§1 — SAFE-TRAVEL-TO-SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM

The bill creates a safe-travel-to-school grant program to provide grants to towns to improve student safety along routes to school. The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) administers the program, accepting applications from towns until July 15, 2014, and awarding grants to up to 10 towns by August 1.

DESPP must establish the program for FY 15 to provide grants to towns for expenses incurred as part of improving student safety along routes of travel to schools and in the immediate areas around schools.

Under the bill, a town can submit an application, in a manner DESPP prescribes, that includes a plan to improve student safety along routes of travel to school and in the immediate areas around schools during the hours before and after regular school hours. Each plan

must:

1. be developed by the town in consultation with the local police and the local or regional board of education for the town,
2. include the travel routes to schools and areas around the schools the plan will cover,
3. establish the hours before and after school during which supervision may be provided along the travel routes and areas around the schools, and
4. require any person helping to implement of the plan to submit to state and national criminal history records checks prior to plan implementation.

In awarding grants, DESPP must give priority to towns with priority school districts or priority schools (see BACKGROUND).

§2 — STUDENT SAFETY HOTLINE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The bill requires DESPP to study the feasibility of establishing a student safety hotline and submit the study's results by January 1, 2015 to the Education Committee.

The study must include an analysis of:

1. the feasibility of establishing a student safety hotline to receive anonymous phone calls and text messages about the school safety concerns of K-12 students and provide assistance and referrals to the students,
2. the relevant referral areas and appropriate entities and agencies to receive the referrals,
3. student safety hotline operator training,
4. existing student safety hotlines in other states,
5. legal issues that might be associated with administering a

student safety hotline, and

6. any other relevant topics or issues associated with such a hotline.

§§ 3 & 4 — SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL OR REJECTION

By law, each board of education must submit a safe school climate plan to SDE. The plan must address bullying in the school district and permit parents and students to file complaints and require complaint investigations, the development of a prevention and intervention strategy, and numerous other steps related to bullying and bullying prevention.

Current law requires the local or regional boards of education to approve the plan and submit it to SDE by January 1, 2012. The bill instead requires boards to submit it to SDE for approval by July 1, 2014.

The bill requires SDE to review each safe school climate plan that boards submit and either approve or reject it. SDE may reject a plan if it does not adequately ensure a safe school climate at the district's schools. If SDE rejects the plan, the local board must redevelop and resubmit it to SDE for approval within 30 days after the rejection. If SDE rejects the resubmitted plan, the board must adopt the SDE-developed model safe school climate plan.

The bill requires the board to make the plan available on the school district's and individual school's website 30 days after SDE approves it, rather than 30 days after the board approves it.

§ 5 — SCHOOL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT SURVEYS

Under current law, boards of education must use surveys to collect information on bullying prevention and intervention in school as part of their assessment of school climate. The bill specifies that districts must use a uniform survey to (1) collect information about students' perspectives and opinions on the climate of their school and (2) allow students to complete and submit the surveys anonymously.

BACKGROUND***Legislative History***

The House referred the original bill (File 451) to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, which favorably reported a substitute that removes a provision extending a school security grant program to private schools.

Related Bills

sSB 106 (File 315), favorably reported by the Human Services Committee, also changes local board of education responsibilities regarding safe school climate plans. Among other changes, the bill requires boards to reassess their plans annually and resubmit them to SDE every two years.

sHB 5593 (File 636), favorably reported by the Judiciary Committee, also makes changes to safe school climate plans by requiring that they address teen dating violence in addition to bullying.

Priority School Districts

By law, priority school districts are districts whose students receive low standardized test scores and have high levels of poverty (CGS § 10-266p(a)). There are 15 priority districts. A priority school is one with a high concentration of low-income students that is not located in a priority district (CGS 10-265e).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 32 Nay 0 (03/21/2014)

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 50 Nay 0 (04/22/2014)